

**White House Conference on Aging  
Solutions Session  
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**In December of 2004, many of us came before this Policy Committee of the White House Conference on Aging. The Alliance and its supporters asked you to listen to our case that biomedical and behavioral research into aging and health must be a prominent element in our nation's strategy for coping with the aging of the U. S. population.**

**Today we present the further substance of that case, with an emphasis on solutions to the problems we face. We hope to empower you as members of the Policy Committee of the WHCoA to lead the full committee in adopting an action-oriented resolution that gives the value of research in aging its proper place in our tool kit for coping with unprecedented numbers of older Americans.**

**We respectfully encourage this White House Conference on Aging to make it clear that America's policies will be proactive rather than reactive to the demographic realities of an aging population. That means policies need to be guided by the powerful searchlight that is research, the scientific explorations and discoveries that shine light on our challenges, particularly in the area of health care, and that guide us to solutions that improve and expand health, vitality**

**and personal independence of Americans as they grow older.**

**This White House Conference on Aging will examine many sets of challenges and solutions that arise from the aging of our largest population cohort, the Baby Boom Generation.**

**But putting the argument in its simplest form, all these challenges will be far more tractable – and lives will be vastly enhanced – if tomorrow’s seniors are enabled to be healthier, more robust in body, mind and spirit, and better able to pursue their dreams and fend for themselves in the larger society.**

**That is the promise of innovation and research into healthy aging. Research by its very nature says ‘we don’t have all the answers yet.’ To support and drive research is our admission that the greying of the Baby Boom generation will require new thinking and new tools to bring into being the greater quality of life that we and our fellow Americans yearn for as we grow older.**

**In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, for the first time in human history the majority of health care came to be directed at managing diseases and disabilities that are chronic in nature, taking their toll over a long period of time, and in most cases associated with aging.**

**As our testimony from the December Listening Session stated, only breakthroughs from research that provide more effective means to prevent, postpone or ameliorate the impact of these diseases will avert a fiscal and social calamity.**

**We have presented testimony before showing that improvements in health born of innovations from research could conserve national fiscal resources by delaying the onset of disease and shortening time spent in hospitals and nursing homes. Indeed, the financial burden of chronic age-related disabilities is simply too large to be quelled with tinkering around the edges of cost containment or by rationing care. We will be wise to place some of our wisest bets on American science and technological ingenuity to “re-invent” aging.**

**There is a growing belief among researchers that advances in medical and related sciences may lead to significant increases in human lifespan in good health.**

**New research discoveries in such areas as genomics, nanotechnology, stem cell and biogenetic engineering, the nutritional sciences, public health, robotics pharmaceutical and biotechnology research and a host of other interrelated fields will be greatly responsible for these revolutionary changes.**

**As such, we will present to you our ‘solutions’ that we feel will meet the need of an aging population by improving the quality of an older person’s life through**

**research and scientific breakthroughs, and at the same time taming the costs of health care by reducing the burdens on our healthcare system by reducing the dependency in old age.**

**This morning you will hear from some of our sharpest thinkers and thought leaders helping us make the case for a research-rich approach to the greying of America. I hope you will keep in mind the following ‘solutions’ that we submit as a challenge to our policy leaders:**

- 1) Accelerate the growth of biomedical and behavioral research and the pace of discovery;**
- 2) Invest in research that will improving the quality, access, and cost-effectiveness of long-term care;**
- 3) Invest in basic and applied research in biomedical, clinical, behavioral/social health services, rehabilitation, and health promotion and disease prevention fields;**
- 4) Invest in population-based studies (rural and urban) of nutrition, physical activity and mobility, incontinence, dementia, and overall geriatric health promotion, in order to understand and project future demands for health care and social services and to identify future aging research topics;**
- 5) Facilitate the creation of a robust minority health research environment through a multi-faceted approach;**
- 6) Emphasis translational research for common geriatric conditions; and**

**7) Improve financial and program support for the training of investigators in aging research in order to attract and retain top young scientists.**

**I want to thank the policy committee for its recognition of the importance of medical research in the context of our rapidly aging population. And I want to extend my thanks to the following organizations that have helped craft these presentations: The American Geriatrics Society, The Gerontological Society of America, Research!America, the Alzheimer's Association, the American Federation for Aging Research, and the Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers.**

**The Alliance for Aging Research and our associate groups look forward to helping the delegates and the leadership of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to gain a purchase on the solutions you will hear today.**

**Thank you.**